Department of Public Health and Human Services	Section: ELIGIBILITY AND BENEFIT DETERMINATION
TANF CASH ASSISTANCE	Subject: Income Tests And Grant Calculation

Supersedes: TANF 603-1 (07/01/05)

≥References: ARM 37.78.102, 37.78.406, 37.78.407, and 37.78.420;
House Bill 2 (2005)

GENERAL RULE-- TANF cash assistance requires two income tests to complete the financial eligibility process. If the filing unit fails either of these tests, it is not eligible for benefits. These tests are:

1.   the gross monthly income (GMI) test, and
2.   the benefit test.

The filing unit's countable earned and unearned income is compared to the GMI and Benefit Standards for household size. The standards used are determined by state and federal rules and regulation. For example, the State Legislature sets the benefit standard at a percentage of the federal poverty index. The gross income standard is set at 185% of the net income standard. Refer to Section 001 of this manual for tables of standards.

INCOME NOT COUNTED: There will be instances when income is not counted prospectively.

EXAMPLE: A participant reports she will be starting employment June 13th; receiving a first paycheck June 30th. Using knowledge of the employment (hours, wages, pay dates, etc.) verified by the employer, the reasonable expectation it will continue as stated by the participant, eligibility and/or grant are reevaluated prospectively. Prospective income is determined using the appropriate method.

The income received in June is not counted against June benefits because the change occurred after issuance. The income is used to project future month's income.

GROSS MONTHLY INCOME TEST   The filing unit's countable income (earned and unearned) must be tested against the gross monthly income (GMI) standard for the unit size. TEAMS evaluates the income by 'Income Type' code and determines whether it is excluded or counted. To pass the GMI test, the unit's gross countable income must be equal to or below the standard.

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BENEFIT STANDARD TEST

The filing unit's countable income must be tested against the benefit standard for the unit's size. Again, TEAMS evaluates by Income Code Type and determines <u>net countable income</u> by:

1. Subtracting earned income disregards from the gross countable earned income of each wage earner;

2. Adding the unit's unearned income to the balance; and

3. Subtracting the 'obligated income" disregard.

EXAMPLE: Earned income
less   -   Earned Income Disregards
plus +   Unearned income
less   -   Obligated Income Disregard (Child support)
EQUALS =   Countable Income

The countable income is then compared to the benefit standard. To pass this test, the unit's countable income must be equal to or below the Benefit Standard.

INCOME DISREGARDS

There are two types of income disregards. One type is **earned income disregards** that are applied to the earned income of the filing unit.

The second income type of disregard is the **obligated income disregard**. The obligated income disregard is applied after the earned income disregards are subtracted and the unearned income is added to the remaining earned income. Refer to Section 602-1 for income disregards policy and procedure.

≥PAYMENT STANDARD

In order to implement the changes outlined in HB 2, a third standard, the **TANF Payment Standard, (33% of FY 2005 Federal Poverty Level),** must be added to the TEAMS financial eligibility determination process. If the household passed the GMI test and the Benefit Standard test after allowable disregards, **the monthly benefit payment amount is <u>determined by subtracting the household's net countable income from the Payment Standard. The payment standard requirements must be used in determining eligibility effective October 2005.</u>**

≥DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY AND/OR GRANT

<u>To determine the TANF cash grant</u> for participants, the countable net income is subtracted from the **<u>payment</u>** standard.

For TANF cash assistance applicants and participants, Form HCS-323, "TANF Cash Assistance Budget Computation Worksheet" is used to determine financial eligibility and/or grant. The following steps outline the

testing and grant calculation process. When using the worksheet, note that the payment standard is not addressed. Follow the process under #18 in this explanation to complete the benefit determination.

GROSS MONTHLY INCOME (GMI)

1.   Enter nonexcluded gross earned income of each wage earner.

2.   Enter total earned income.

3.   Enter non-excluded gross unearned income of each filing unit member.

4.   Enter total unearned income.

5.   Add total earned and unearned income and enter balance.

6.   Compare the balance to the GMI Standard for household size. If income is less than or equal to the appropriate standard, continue.

7.   <u>If income exceeds the standard, the household is ineligible.</u>

8.   Enter total earned income. See section 602-1 for income disregard policy and procedure.

9.   Subtract the $200 work expense disregard for each wage earner.

10.   Enter subtotal.

11.   Subtract 25 percent of subtotal.

12.   Enter sub total

13.   Subtract dependent care costs up to $200 per child or incapacitated adult, as appropriate.

14.   Enter subtotal

15.   Add total unearned income.

16.   Enter subtotal

17.   Subtract the obligated income disregard of legally binding child support, if applicable.

18. Enter balance. <u>This is the total net countable income</u>.

<u>BENEFIT STANDARD</u>

19. Enter the Benefit Standard for household size.

20. Compare the balance to the Benefit Standard for household size. If income is less than or equal to the appropriate standard, continue.

   If the result is:

   a. Zero or less, the unit is ineligible for assistance.

   b. Greater than zero, the unit is eligible for TANF cash assistance.

≥ **21. Enter the Payment Standard for household size**.

22. If greater than zero:

   Subtract the amount of the total countable income from the <u>Payment Standard</u> for the appropriate assistance unit size.

23. The remaining balance is the amount of the cash assistance benefit to be authorized.

24. Prorate grant if the first benefit month is a partial month (the application date comes after the first day of the month).

   Prorate as follows:

   a. Divide the grant by thirty (30) days;

   b. Multiply the total in "a" by the total number of assistance days in the month.

   NOTE: The day of application plus the actual days remaining to the end of the month constitute the number of assistance days.

   c. Round this amount down to the next whole dollar and enter amount on line 23.

25. Subtract recovery amount, if applicable.

> **NOTE:** A recovery amount should never reduce the benefit to less than ten dollars ($10.00) dollars.

26. Enter benefit amount. This amount must be whole dollar amount - round down.

Enter effective date. This is the date of application for the first month's grant or the first day of the benefit month.

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PROCEDURE		ACTION

Eligibility
Case Manager

1. Conduct a thorough interview and investigation to obtain relevant information about the household.

2. Determine the amount of countable income using the appropriate budgeting method.

3. Enter all non-financial and financial data on TEAMS.

4. If the filing unit is eligible, continue with evaluating the household's needs to authorize appropriate benefits.

≥TEAMS PROCESSING

Once the income, earned and/or unearned, is determined using one or more of the methods listed at Section 601-1, it is entered on the TEAMS Income screens (EAIN, SEEI, UNIN, or DEID) with the appropriate income type code. TEAMS will process this data, evaluating income as countable or excluded, ensuring that all non-financial criteria and resource eligibility have been passed prior to testing the income to the Gross Monthly Income (GMI), applying the income disregards, testing the balance to the Benefit Standards, **and subtracting the net countable income from the Payment Standard.**

The results are displayed on the EXPD (EXperimental Payment Determinator) screen.

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This screen summarizes the results of the GMI, Benefit, and Payment Standard tests. These tests are performed on TEAMS on every case prior to the Eligibility Case Manager's authorization even if a case does not have any countable income. This ensures that TEAMS performs the mandatory income eligibility determination for each case.

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